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By William H. Perkins Jr.

Editor

Members and friends of First Church, Gulfport, bid farewell on the afternoon of March 26 to their beloved beachfront complex brought down last year by the wind and waves of Hurricane Katrina.

"The Church of Jesus Christ is not at this location," said former longtime member Ken Parvin, who was born into the church and currently serves as pastor of Heucks Retreat Church, Brookhaven. Gesturing to the hundreds of people gathered in and around the large tent pitched alongside the ruins of the church's expansive physical plant, he said, "I am looking at First Baptist Church. Ladies and gentlemen, never forget that the Church of Jesus Christ is in you."

Church members have made the decision to relocate and are searching for land north of Interstate 10, several miles inland from the present location.

Karen Simmons, who has worked at the church for 26 years and has been a member since 1966, recalled that her parents first met each other 52 years ago while attending Training Union at the church's Beach Boulevard facilities. She spoke of her wedding there to husband Frank, who is manager of Gulfshore Assembly near Pass Christian, and the marriages of their children in the church.

Gulfshore Assembly is owned by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and was also destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The Conference Ministries Study Committee, appointed shortly after the storm by then-Mississippi Baptist Convention



FINAL SERVICE — Hundreds of people gather at the beachfront location of First Church, Gulfport on March 26 for the final worship service at that location. Church members have voted to begin the search for suitable property north of Interstate 10, farther removed inland from the danger of major hurricane landfalls in the future. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

President Gene Henderson, is studying the condition of the assembly and will explore all possibilities related to future conference ministries in Mississippi.

Another longtime church member, Herbert "Coach" Wilson, said he first attended the church in 1945 and was encouraged by plans to secure land farther inland that is less susceptible to the effects of major hurricanes.

"If God leads us to buy that land, God will lead us to build facilities on that land," he said.

First Church Pastor Chuck Register spoke of the many special memories the church evokes — comical, sacrificial, and eternal. Delivering a message from the third chapter of the Book of Philippians, Register urged the congregation to "reflect, refocus, and recommit," in order to be "people just like Jesus Christ."

After the final service, people lingered on the broken street in front of the fenced-off city block on which rests the church's buildings. Cane-carrying older members were joined by young parents holding infants in taking one long, last look at the venerable church complex. The property will soon be listed for sale.

First Church, Gulfport, was constituted in 1896 and constructed its first building in 1899 at the corner on 14th Street and 23rd Avenue. In 1915, the church moved about one block to its present location at 22nd Avenue and Highway 90. Hurricane Camille pushed about four feet of water into the church in 1969, but Katrina gutted most of the buildings on the property and reduced the sanctuary to its steel superstructure.

The stark photographs of the ruined church quickly became an international symbol of the fury of Hurricane Katrina and the unprecedented destruction wrought by the storm. The church body is presently meeting at Gulfport High School.

Katrina victims: don't forget us

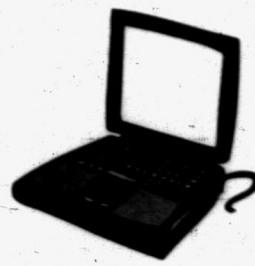
Although many disaster relief volunteer groups and other organizations have begun to turn their attention toward planning for the upcoming 2006 hurricane season, the needs are still great in the areas of the Mississippi Gulf Coast ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. A plea often heard from Hurricane Katrina victims across the Coast is that they not be forgotten as preparations get underway for the new hurricane season.

A special telephone number and e-mail address have been established for Mississippi Baptists interested in volunteering for the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. The telephone hotline number is (601) 292-3206. The e-mail address is mbcbdisasterrelief@mbcb.org. If

offering assistance via e-mail, please include full name and a return telephone number, so that you may be contacted directly regarding details.

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board continues to accept donations to fund both the immediate needs and the long-term Mississippi Baptist disaster relief efforts along the Gulf and throughout the state. Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Hurricane Relief" noted on the memo line, and mailed to MBCB Business Office, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Fully 100% of the donations will be used directly for hurricane relief. More information on how to contribute can be obtained by calling (601) 292-3206, or e-mailing mbcbdisasterrelief@mbcb.org.



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The real Christian 'standard'

The news out of Afghanistan on the morning of March 28 was good, for a change. Abdul Rahman, an Afghan citizen facing the death penalty for the high crime of converting to Christianity from Islam, was freed from prison and offered asylum in Italy. The prayers of millions of people around the world were answered.

Just a few days before, Muslim clerics like Faiez Mohammed in the northern Afghanistan town of Kunduz were calling for Rahman's execution on religious grounds. "Abdul Rahman must be killed. Islam demands it," he said. Other Muslim clerics threatened to foment civil unrest if international pleas to spare Rahman's life were heeded by government officials.

News reports indicate Rahman, age 41, was arrested in February when a Bible was found in his possession. He is said to have converted to Christianity more than 16 years ago and been disowned by most his family and friends. While his faith was not a secret, authorities were either unaware or uninterested in him until recently.

Rahman has steadfastly refused all offers to renounce Christianity and thus spare himself the death penalty. He was even placed in a prison populated with large numbers of Taliban and Al Qaida after authorities said he was in danger in the local lockup. Still, he was unharmed when finally released.

Rahman is not yet safe, however. Islamic radicals are reportedly looking to gun him down when they find him. We must continue to pray for this bold brother in Christ and his family until they are out of Afghanistan and on their way to asylum — but even then, Rahman will continue to be hunted by madmen for the rest of his life.

"I'M ANGRY WITH GOD FOR NEVER TRUSTING ME ENOUGH TO MAKE ME SUFFER."



Rahman's story serves to remind us of the plight of Christians all around the world. For 2,000 years now, many Christians have been forced to live the life described in Hebrews 11: "Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated... They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground." (NIV)

We American Christians tend to forget just how good we have it — and what an exception is our lifestyle to the "standard" Christian lifestyle as described in Hebrews 11 and many other places in the Bible. When we attended church last Sunday, we didn't have to worry about heavily-armed government troops storming the worship service and hauling all of us to some unknown location to be held and tortured. We didn't have to worship in distraction for fear of a bomb that would bring the building down, or that our children would be taken from us for indoctrination against our faith.

We didn't have to hide our Bibles or meet in catacombs and identify ourselves with secret symbols. We were not flogged, chained, thrown in prison, forced to wear animal skins, driven into poverty, persecuted, or mistreated. We did not have our homes taken from us so that we were forced to wander around in search of a cave or hole in the ground in which to live.

In the midst of all our religious and secular luxury we must not forget the martyrs, or those who are with us now and those in the future who will pay such a high price for the sake of Christ. Those who must endure such persecution should always be in our prayers, along with the missionaries and their families who are striving to bring a lost world to Jesus in some of the most religiously-in hospitable places on earth.

Pray, give, and go. When we are truly engaged on all three of those levels, people like Abdul Rahman won't be living in fear of their lives. Let's get busy.

GUEST OPINION: Help celebrate Ministerial Ed

By Kermit and
Phyllis McGregor
Clinton



I was licensed and ordained to the ministry by Algoma Church in March and October of 1955. New Hope Church, Pontotoc, called me as pastor in October. Shortly after my seventeenth birthday, Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas, called me as pastor.

Claude A. Smith, a deacon, took me to visit Wilfred C. Tyler, who was the Modena Lowery Berry Bible Professor at Blue Mountain College (BMC) in Blue Mountain, to inquire about enrollment. Tyler was later to be installed as the first non-Lowery family member to serve as president of the school, which is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

In the fall of 1956, my extraordinary BMC journey began. The campus was restricted to female students at that time, but I was able to attend through the new ministerial education program that prepared young men for full-time Christian service.

Phyllis joined me at BMC the next fall. She took summer courses, caught up with me, and we graduated as the first couple in 1960. She received a bachelor of science degree with a major in elementary education and a minor in social science, and I received a bachelor of arts degree with a double major in Bible and social science and a minor in English.

The college awarded me an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree in 1978, the first minister to be granted such a degree.

Phyllis says she will always be grateful for the privilege of receiving a degree from Blue Mountain College "because of the heritage of the institution, the emphasis on Christian values, the Christ-like professors, the formation of life long friendships, etc." She cautions couples to "make arrangements to purchase two books when taking the same class because the strain of studying with one book can adversely affect the expected calmness of domestic life."

She also shares that she "received excellent academic and practical training for her years as an elementary teacher in Picayune, New Orleans, Ingomar, and Winona, as well as my eighteen years as a nurse at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson."

As a minister's wife expected to excel in every area, she will always remember with deep emotionalism her classes "in music appreciation and specialized training in etiquette skills for social confidence."

My first BMC class was in New Testament, taught by Tyler. Ironically, it was Tyler who took Phyllis and me to our



first Mississippi Baptist Convention. Did he dare foresee that I would eventually serve two terms as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and also serve as chairman of trustees at The Baptist Children's Village in Jackson; chair of the Mississippi Baptist Education Commission; chair of the board of trustees for three years at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City; and trustee of William Carey College in Hattiesburg?

Phyllis and I thank the Lord for the opportunity we had to attend Blue Mountain College.

The McGregors are now retired but Kermit has served for the past two years as transitional pastor of First Church, Starkville. In addition to the churches listed above, they have served at First Church, Mendenhall; Morrison Heights Church, Clinton; Temple Church, Hattiesburg; First Church, Winona; and First Church, Bruce. Kermit also served for five years as director of public relations at the Baptist Children's Village.

Blue Mountain College, currently in its first semester as a coeducational institution, will celebrate 50 years of ministerial education on March 31 beginning at 10 a.m. in Modena Lowery Berry Auditorium on campus.

Baptist students make cleanup discovery



HONEST STUDENTS — Trista Wright (left), with fellow collegiate volunteer Haley Barton in New Orleans, recounts for CBS News' The Early Show finding \$30,000 in a home she was clearing of damage and debris from Hurricane Katrina. The students promptly notified their mission trip leader and saw that the money was turned over to its rightful owners. (BP photo)

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — After ripping sheetrock from a moldy closet, Trista Wright was removing the debris when a flash of green caught her eye.

Wright, on a spring break mission trip to New Orleans, reached into the debris and pulled out an old, grubby \$100 bill. As she dug around in the debris a little more, she discovered that an air conditioning vent secretly had served as a makeshift safe. She pulled out another \$100 bill, then another, and another.

"At first, I thought it was Monopoly money. It was just stacks of \$100 bills. The money was very old," said Wright, who was part of a Baptist Collegiate Ministries group from Armstrong Atlantic University in Savannah, Ga.

When the students hastily totaled the money, it was more than \$30,000. The discovery presented a new problem: "What do we do now?"

After consulting with the leaders of the mission trip, they decided to notify the local

authorities. The sheriff's department came, verified the identity of the homeowner, and learned that the home had been in the family for several generations.

The owner of the home, who wanted to remain anonymous, had inherited the house after her mother died a couple of years ago. Wright said the woman was not surprised by the find because her mother hid things around her house all the time. In addition, her father was suspicious of placing money in banks, having grown up in Depression era.

Even though finding something hidden was not a surprise, the amount was a shock to the homeowner. "The lady was speechless," Wright said. "It was such a blessing to the family. The Lord really blessed the family at the right time because [the owner] had some medical tests done today and was very anxious about the results."

The collegians' honesty sparked plenty of media attention, including an Associated Press article that was picked up across the United States and in numerous countries and a segment on CBS News' The Early Show.

There was never any thought of keeping the money, Wright told the AP. "We were called there to serve people and to be Christ-like." Otherwise, "I would have regretted it. Nothing good would have come of it."

"Trista came down here to serve, because Christ served," said Aaron Arledge, the New Orleans-area coordinator for the many Baptist collegiate teams streaming to the city during their spring break to gut flood-ravaged homes.

"It's great that an honest group was in the house," Arledge added. "Someone else might have just taken the money. The family thought it was a miracle. For them to have lost so much and then to find this hidden treasure was just awesome."

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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More RU 486 deaths

WASHINGTON (BP) — Two more women in the United States have died after taking the abortion drug RU 486, once again prompting calls for suspension of its sale. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced March 17 it had been verbally informed of the deaths by Danco Laboratories, which markets the drug in this country. Danco has made no public statement, and the FDA said it did not know the causes of the deaths. At least seven women have died in the United States after using the two-step drug regimen since RU 486 went on the market in September 2000. The FDA announced in July 2005 four California women who underwent chemical abortions had died from an uncommon and lethal bacterial infection known as Clostridium sordellii. The FDA is helping convene a workshop May 11 in Atlanta for the purpose of drafting an agenda for research on the infection. Critics of RU 486 said more drastic action needs to be taken. The workshop is "too little and too late" for the mothers who died and their families, said Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-Md.), sponsor of a bill to suspend sale of RU 486 while the FDA conducts a review of its approval for sale. "How many more women must die or be injured before Congress acts to protect American women's lives and health from an irresponsible company and a timid FDA?" At least 12 women outside the United States have died after using the abortion drug, according to the National Right to Life Committee. RU 486, also known as mifepristone, is used as the first part of a process normally occurring in the first seven weeks of pregnancy. Mifepristone causes the lining of the uterus to release the embryonic child. A second drug, misoprostol, is taken two days after mifepristone and causes the uterus to contract, expelling the baby. So far, Congress has indicated little impulse to get involved in the controversy over RU 486. The House bill has only 79 cosponsors, while the Senate version has only 11. The legislation is the RU 486 Suspension and Review Act, H.R. 1079 in the House and S. 511 in the Senate.



SURPRISE CACHE — The \$30,000 in cash found by collegian Trista Wright at a New Orleans home damaged by Hurricane Katrina initially seemed like "Monopoly money," she said. The discovery was carried by media outlets across the U.S., including CBS News' The Early Show. (BP photo)

Looking back

10 years ago

New Zion Church, Choctaw Association, suffers a near-total loss in the early morning hours of March 28, sustaining major damage from a 1 a.m. blaze. Local fire departments were able to save the vacant church parsonage.

20 years ago

Meadow Grove Church, Brandon, exceeds its Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goal by more than 30% in one call to the altar by pastor Rick Kennedy. A luncheon was held after the service, with dishes native to all 50 states served to churchgoers.

60 years ago

The first Brotherhood convention in the state of Mississippi is planned for April 1 - 2 at First Church, Jackson.

Daylights Savings Time



Sunday April 2

NOBODY IS LAUGHING

I enjoy humor. I have studied it through the years, often used it, and frequently enjoyed it when other people have interjected it into a speech, event, or life. Humor can encourage people. It can change events or a hostile atmosphere. It can make a point, or lift a spirit. On the other hand, I do not like humor when it is used to hurt. It can be the most painful weapon of all. When humor is used to hurt someone it is unkind, uncaring, and unneeded. The way humor is used in this fashion is to package something that is extremely painful in the wrappings of something that is cute or funny. It may solicit a nervous chuckle or a low-grade polite laughter, but actually it deserves no response.

I was thinking about the cruelty of humor recently when the series of church burnings took place across Alabama. When the three young men were caught and put in jail, the initial information received as to why they did what they did was that it was a joke that got out of hand. It was just a prank that went too far. As the information filtered out to the media, other discoveries shed light on what took place. Three young guys had gone deer hunting, but in addition to hunting they were drinking. What started out as a fun-time sporting event together began to be reshaped



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

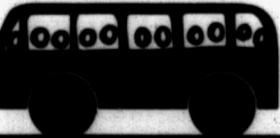
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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by pouring chemicals into their bodies. The world began to look different and their thinking became distorted. As the day wore on and the drinking continued, the thought of burning a church down to the ground began to seem funny.

While I do not know these three young men, apparently they were bright and gifted with wonderful futures ahead. What is so sad is that all of those things (or none of those things) have any significance any more. Just think about their joke that got out of hand. When I heard the story about what happened my first thought was how dumb. That's easy enough for me to say but in reality who among us has not at some time or another lined up in the "dumb parade" of life? In fact, most of us at one time or another have appeared to be the drum major of the dumb parade. Tragically, all of our sins and each of our violations may have seemed like a smart, even funny, thing to do at the time, but in retrospect all

of the laughter subsides and we seem to be standing there totally exposed and trying to explain our dumbness.

Then I thought not only was what they did dumb, but it was destructive. Can you imagine your mind being so twisted and your perception being so warped by the effects of alcohol that you begin to think that destroying the house of God, a place of worship, help, and hope, would be funny? If you are thinking rationally, it probably seems far-fetched but virtually all of our dumb decisions can become destructive. How many times have you known someone to make a decision that they knew the outcome would be the destruction of their family? Yet they pressed right on and to them it made sense. Maybe a person has habits and a lifestyle that would obviously destroy their health, yet they just continued right on and eventually walked right on in to the consequences.

Finally, after their dumb and destructive actions took place,

they made another decision that was very deliberate. They decided to go and burn some other churches to divert attention away from what they had already done. Now in the stone cold sobering moment of reality, they thought that doing more of what they had already done would solve the problem. While that may not make good sense to you and me, probably all of us in one way or another have done the same thing at some time.

How many people have you known that rejected Christ, then after rejecting the Lord they found that life just continued to be unpleasant, painful, and worse than before — only to conclude that the best thing for them to do was to reject Christ again? I suppose this whole process is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he described the mystery of iniquity. Sin has an awesome hold on us, works in us, and warps our thinking until everything is twisted around and out of sorts. God knew that the only way we could be helped is not just to think better and be smarter, but also to have a Savior who can literally transform us, so out of the deep wells of His love He sent His only Son to die for our sins and to give us a new life. Hallelujah!

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mcb.org.

WCC looks to reopen Coast campus library

GULFPORT, Ms. (Special) — The William Carey College (WCC) Coast campus library will reopen in April on the grounds of the demolished beachfront campus, following the destruction of the building and 70% of the library's books and resources during Hurricane Katrina.

"We are not waiting until the rebuilding of the new campus to reopen the library," said Patricia Furr, WCC director of libraries and learning resources. "The administration has given us two trailers on the old soccer field. We ordered furniture and shelving and will house 12,500 books and eight computers."

With an expected opening date in April, the temporary library will be housed on the old Coast campus along with other temporary classroom trailers and offices until the new campus is built north of Interstate 10. Supplies needed to reopen the library, including printers and bar code scanners, were purchased with grants from the Mississippi Humanities Council and the National Network of Libraries of Medicine.

"It has been wonderful to see how many people genuinely care about the students and faculty of WCC," said Furr. "Many students lost everything, including their homes and their school. Having a library back on the Coast campus is so important for them to be able to recover and resume their studies. We sincerely appreciate everyone's help."



SHATTERED LIBRARY — The library on William Carey College's Coast campus in Gulfport lies in ruins after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Mississippi Gulf Coast in late August 2005. Efforts are underway to reopen the library by next month. (Photo courtesy of William Carey College)

"Because the storm's last minute turn and its unprecedented degree of destruction, many Carey students and faculty did not have time to prepare and evacuate the items they would need during this time of rebuilding," said Furr. "The CRV students lost the libraries that they had been building in preparation to do full time ministry. This donation will allow them to restore their personal libraries."

An accrediting visit is scheduled for 2006-07, so there is a priority in replacing the books that were lost in the two disci-

plines. Approximately 63% or

\$100,000 worth of books were destroyed by the hurricane. Furr estimates that even with insurance money and donations, approximately \$75,000 is still needed.

"God seems to have placed the needs of the library on many people's hearts," said Furr.

The library's plight was included in the magazine, Mississippi Libraries, winter edition and photos of the destroyed library and materials, taken by Furr and Patrivan Yuen, technical services and system librarian, have circulated around the United States.

Library staff and volunteers were able to salvage approximately 37% of the items from the Coast library. "We were able to recover 5893 books and 488 bound serial volumes from the upper shelves that were untouched waters."

William Carey College opened the Gulfport campus in 1976 when it purchased the property of the defunct Gulf Coast Military Academy. Known as Carey on the Coast, the 20-acre Gulfport campus offered selected undergraduate and graduate programs that will be continued at its new location.

For more information on the library project, contact Grant Guthrie, WCC director of development operations, at (601) 318-6193 or grant.guthrie@wmcarey.edu.

NAMB trustees to set guidelines after critical report

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — Robert E. (Bob) Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), will work under several sets of "Executive Level controls" signaled by NAMB's trustees during a special meeting on March 23.

The trustees based their deliberations on a 19-page report by a nine-member trustee task force created in response to an article in the Georgia Baptist Convention's newsjournal, *The Christian Index*, which set forth a range of allegations about NAMB's evangelism and church planting strategies; the size and makeup of its missionary force; and management issues related to Reccord.

"We want the Southern Baptist Convention to know we've responded to the issues [through the task force report] and because of that response we believe that you can trust what we're doing here at NAMB," trustee chairman Barry Holcomb said in a news conference after the meeting. "We want Southern Baptists to know you can trust the North American Mission Board to take your Cooperative Program dollars that you generously give through the state conventions, and you can trust us with your Annie Armstrong



Reccord

Easter Offering to be on mission and to do the work of God's Kingdom."

The task force report is posted on www.namb.net.

The 58-member trustee board unanimously approved a six-part plan to establish the Executive Level controls for Reccord during a meeting stretching seven and a half hours, at NAMB's Atlanta-area headquarters in Alpharetta, Ga. The

meeting was held in executive session because SBC trustees typically meet in private when dealing with personnel issues.

NAMB Chief Operating Officer Chuck Allen, who submitted his resignation on March 22, "resigned for reasons that did not involve our discussions today in the board meeting," Holcomb said. "Chuck Allen has been a friend of the trustees. ... We stand ready to assist Chuck Allen in whatever future ministry opportunities God has for him."

Holcomb otherwise declined comment about Allen's departure. Two other high-level NAMB employees have also resigned recently.

Reccord has been NAMB's president since its founding in 1997 as part of the SBC restructuring called Covenant for a New Century. NAMB primarily was formed in a merger of the SBC's former



DISCUSSING REPORT — North American Mission Board (NAMB) trustees listen March 23 to the results of a report by a nine-member task force set up to look into an analysis in *The Christian Index*, the news journal of the Georgia Baptist Convention, that questioned the NAMB's leadership. (BP photo by John Swain/The Christian Index)

Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission, and Brotherhood Commission.

At the time, Reccord was pastor of First Church in Norfolk, Va., and head of the committee tasked with the restructuring of the three agencies.

Under the accountability plan for Reccord, a trustee subcommittee will be appoint-

ed by Holcomb "to develop a set of Executive Level controls to be used as a guide" related to various issues raised in the Feb. 16 *Christian Index* article.

The subcommittee, which Holcomb said he hopes to name during the coming month, will propose controls for:

- "directing the travel, speaking, and on-campus office time required for the President..."

- "the use of RFP's" (Request For Proposals), akin to bidding to compete for work being outsourced by NAMB.

- "when the President ... wants to develop new initiatives, including the appropriate oversight and approval by the Board."

- "clarifying what constitutes poor management by an executive officer and how it should be handled."

- providing Reccord and NAMB "with greater levels of accountability" to the trustee board and the SBC.

Under the sixth part of the plan, the board assigned "its duly elected officers, in perpetuity, with the role of monitoring these controls, utilizing them as

part of the President's annual review, and reporting the status of these controls annually at an assigned full Board meeting."

Reccord said in a statement: "I am thankful that the trustee process worked. That's why we have such a process. While we jointly found opportunities and areas on which to strengthen and improve, I celebrate the fact that the deep and thorough financial and practices audit gave us a clean bill of health, including the status and history of our reserves."

Reccord said he hopes NAMB now can refocus on its ministry. "This has been a time of great distraction for all of our staff from the task of North American missions," he said in his statement.

Asked by a reporter about a fear among NAMB employees of being terminated if they raise concerns about the organization's direction and operation, Holcomb acknowledged that some staffers have voiced such fears. Curtis said the task force report will reflect a concern "to see what we can do to remedy that."

Trustees eye outsourcing, relationships

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — A 19-page report by a task force of North American Mission Board (NAMB) trustees, while addressing allegations raised in an article by the Georgia Baptist state paper, notes:

"After a great deal of conversation, the Trustees who participated in this process reached some consensus that the primary issues raised in the story revolve around Dr. Reccord," the Southern Baptist entity's president, Robert E. (Bob) Reccord, who has served since its founding in 1997. Among the concerns of the trustees:

- The mission board could be accused of a conflict of interest involving Reccord and a firm to which NAMB has outsourced media work that is owned by a friend from a previous pastorate.

The concern involves the use of InovaOne, a firm owned by Steve Sanford, a member of Reccord's former church in Norfolk, Va. InovaOne was hired to do an audit of NAMB's media strategies, followed by the audit's recommended termination of NAMB employees and the subsequent outsourcing of their work and various other NAMB media initiatives to Sanford's firm.

- that Reccord has "underdeveloped his relationships" with state Baptist conventions and their executive leadership.

Regarding Reccord's relationships with state Baptist conventions, the trustee report listed several "perceptions [that] exist in the state conventions" and noted: "Because perception is reality for many people, the Trustees feel that it is necessary, at the very least, to ask the question as to why these perceptions exist, and to consider what might be done to assist Dr. Reccord in repairing these relationships and

changing the image he may be projecting. After all, the success of the Agency in many ways is related directly to the success its President has in relating to the state conventions."

The perceptions listed by the trustees are:

- "The President has underdeveloped his relationships with state executives and conventions, and as a result, has given the appearance of a 'top down' leadership style that has hindered some relationships and some strategies like 'What Now?'" a NAMB evangelistic emphasis launched after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

- "The President has chosen at times to emphasize events and venues that are on the periphery of NAMB's true mission: evangelism and church planting.

- "The President has not been providing the kind of consistent oversight that is necessary on a day-to-day basis to properly manage the Agency.

"Consequently, the President has participated in, or presided over, some poor management decisions on a number of levels, including Elevate [conferences for twenty somethings] and InovaOne, which has cost NAMB financially and hindered the confidence that the SBC has in the Agency."

The 58-member trustee board reviewed the task force report during a special meeting March 23 at NAMB's Atlanta-area headquarters in Alpharetta, Ga.

They unanimously adopted an accountability plan for Reccord involving a trustee subcommittee that will "develop a set of Executive Level controls to be used as a guide" related to various issues raised in the task force report and the *Christian Index* article.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Nance and Dowdy, Cairo Church, Pontotoc Association

1. Cairo Church, Pontotoc Association, had a welcome home from Iraq supper for Keith Nance. William G. Dowdy presented him with a love offering from the church, which he in turn gave to the building fund of the church in honor of all fallen veterans. Shown are Nance and Dowdy.

2. Calvary Church, Pricedale, recently held a GA mother-daughter luncheon honoring state GA director Robin Keels. Shown are Beverly & Rebecca Myers, Susie & Carley Fortenberry, Keels, Susie & Lyndsey Reid, and Hazel & Michelle Lawrence.

3. The Baptist Women of Goss Church, Columbia, held a county wide Hurricane Katrina shower. Area churches and organizations collected an 18-

wheeler full of supplies. Shown, from left, are Melinda King, Carol King, Judy Williamson, Carolyn Buckley, Ginger Pierce, Tracie Sullivan, Gail McArthur, Pegi Johnson, Joy McComb, Darren Hathorn, and Kathy Prisk.

4. First Church, Sharon, Laurel, held a GA quilt-a-thon to raise money for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The quilt will be given to the pastor of Eastlawn Church, Pasagoula, the church adopted by First Church, Sharon. Shown with the girls are the two ladies who helped them learn quilting techniques.

5. Pike Association will honor retiring AMD Charles Davis and his wife Betty at their annual spring associational meeting Apr.



30 at South McComb Church with a reception following the service — plus a few surprises during the service. A special pre-session music presentation begins at 6:45 p.m.

6. Winston Association is sponsoring an evangelism preaching conference at Harmony Church, Nanih Waiya, Apr. 20. Preaching from various preachers as God leads, 1-5 p.m.; supper, 5-6:30 p.m.; Randall Creel, Forest, and Ed Knox, Columbus, preaching, 7-9 p.m.

7. Highland Church, Natchez, is holding its Vacation Bible School May 29-Jun. 2, 8:30 a.m.-noon.

8. First Church, Moss Point, honored Tolbert Bennett for 53 plus years as church treasurer. The church presented him with a plaque-inscribed offering plate and a painting. Shown are pastor Michael Perry, Billy Hardin, Bennett, and Harold Mothershed.



2. GA Mother Daughter Luncheon, Calvary Church, Pricedale



3. Hurricane Katrina Shower, Goss Church, Columbia



4. GA Quilt-a-thon, First Church Sharon, Laurel



8. Bennett Honored for Service, First Church, Moss Point

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Beulah Church, Newton Association: Revival, Apr. 2-5; Ron Harrison, Pearl, speaker; Danny Harrison, Polkville, music; Keith Ramage, pastor.

Big Level Church, Wiggins: Revival, Apr. 2-5; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Bill Barton, speaker; Matt Celoria, music; David Perry, pastor.

Calvary Church, Durant: Homecoming, Apr. 2; Worship, 11 a.m.; meal following; B.A. (Buddy) Conway, former pastor, speaking; Harold Schmidt, pastor.

First Church, Baldwyn: Revival, Apr. 9-12, Sun., 6:00 p.m.; Mon.-Wed. 7 p.m.; Rex Yancey, evangelist; Karen Davis, music; Gayle Alexander, pastor.

Gunnison Church, Gunnison: 150th Anniversary, Jun. 25; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch, noon; afternoon services, 2 p.m., with special guest speakers, music, and testimonies.

Mt. Vernon Church, Liberty: Revival, Mar. 31-Apr. 2; Fri.-Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.; Odus Jackson, speaker; Clint and Laura Penalber, music; Clint Penalber, pastor.

Holly Church, Alcorn Association: Revival, Apr. 2-5; Sun., 11 a.m. and Sun.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Larry Robertson, Clarksville, Tenn., speaker; Billy Joe Kennedy, Savannah, Tenn., music; Tony Morrow, pastor.

Linwood Church, Union: Revival, Apr. 2-4; 7 p.m. nightly; Mack Alford, speaker.

Macedonia Church, Lee County: Revival, Apr. 9-12; Ronnie Hatfield, Starkville, speaker; John Shakelford, pastor; Billy Little, music director.

North Columbia Church, Columbia: Revival, Apr. 2-5; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 6:40 p.m. music and services, 7 p.m. Mike Grenn, speaker; James Bell, minister of music; special music includes the Carney Family, Sound of Joy trio, North Columbia Quartet, Youth Ensemble, North Columbia soloists, and others.

Society Hill Church, Oakville: Revival, Apr. 23-26; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Charles Burnham, speaker; James Bell, music; Tommy Broom, pastor; Billy Paul Cooper, minister of music.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



9. Children's Penny Drive, Old Union Church, Lafayette County



10. Kennedy and Bullock, Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association



11. Perfect Attendance, Lorena Church, Smith County

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COLLEGE NEWS



1. Maley Receives Byrd Memorial Preaching Award, MC

9. Nicolas, Breanna, and MaKayla Thomas, the children's Sunday School class of Old Union Church in Lafayette County, collected 3000 pennies representing children who had been aborted. Shown are the children.
10. The Brotherhood of Concord Church, Benton-Tippah Association, selects Gary Kennedy, Music Director, as Man of the Year for 2006. Shown are Kennedy and Lyle Bullock, Brotherhood president.
11. Lorena Church, Smith County, recognized those with perfect attendance in Sunday School. Front row: Carolyn Sistrunk, 1 year; Betty Stewart, 13 years; Sue Bailey, 2 years; back row: Tommy Anderson, pastor; Jim Praet, S.S. director.

OBITUARIES

Grant U. Clark, 89, of Columbus, Ga., died Feb. 24. Clark, a graduate of New Orleans Seminary, pastored churches in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, for over 50 years. He was buried in the Henry Cemetery in Corinth.

Carey Sansing, 91, Columbus, died Feb. 12 at Aurora Australis Lodge, with graveside services Feb. 14, George Myers and Don

Harding officiating. He was a member of New Covenant Church, Columbus. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister, serving churches in Mississippi and Texas for 65 years. Survivors include his wife, Lessie Felder Sansing; daughters, Beverly Ivy, Savannah, Ga.; Mary Lee Cadden and Karen Spruill, Seymour, Tenn.; eight grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

Maude May Byrd and to encourage expository, Biblical preaching. Shown are Harrell Byrd, of Brandon; Maley; and Wayne VanHorn, Chair of the Department of Christian Studies.

2. The Mississippi College Department of Art is pleased to announce that a bronze relief sculpture submitted by Courtney Melton, a graduate art student in the MFA program, has been accepted into the Mississippi Collegiate Art Competition. An awards presentation and reception honoring Melton will be held on April 1, 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the Field Wright Art Center Gallery at Delta State.

3. The William Carey College Forensics (Speech and Debate) team was named Division Two National Debate Sweepstakes Champions at the National Christian College Forensics Invitational Tournament

1. John Thomas Maley, a senior Christian Studies and Philosophy major at Mississippi College from Memphis, Tenn., has been named as the recipient of the 2006 Byrd Memorial Preaching Award, an award established as a memorial to the lives of David Q. Byrd, Sr. and

held this past weekend at John Brown University in Arkansas. William Carey College director of forensics Dan Schabot, Josiah Burns, Chasidy Griggs, Phillip Londeree, Jonathan Allen, Micah Burns, Chiwoneso Tinago, and Maggie Barwick are pictured here following the tournament.



3. WCC Forensics Team Named Division Two National Debate Sweepstakes Champions

First Baptist Church
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7:00 p.m.

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CREC ELPACR HK CRAA;
ETG HK RXZ CREC
CEPACR EJEM CRM
YHHGL ELP CRAZ THC
EYEXT.

VNPA LXI:CRXFCM

Clue: Y = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Six: Four.

IMB trustees OK policies, BFM affirmation



TELL THE WORLD — Children's choirs sing an anthem, Tell the World, and represent the nations of the globe by wearing traditional ethnic costumes during an International Mission Board missionary appointment service March 22 at Idlewild Church in Tampa, Fla. Forty-five new missionaries were appointed at the service. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

TAMPA, Fla. (BP and local reports) — International Mission Board (IMB) trustees formalized a new process for approving missionary candidates and adopted a formal document explaining trustee responsibilities and relationships during their meeting March 20-22 in Tampa, Fla. Trustees also passed a motion requesting new trustees to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BFM).

One significant board action formalized a new process that involves all trustees in examining and approving candidates for long-term service. The new procedure, implemented on a trial basis during the past two board meetings, will now be continued for the foreseeable future.

During regular board meetings, personnel subcommittees — made up of at least two regional committees — will review missionary candidate applications for their specific regions, Floyd said. The subcommittees will recommend candidates for appointment to the personnel committee, which will recommend them to the full board.

Formerly, only trustees on the personnel committee reviewed material related to the missionary candidates. This board action opens the candidate-review process to all the trustees.

Trustees also developed and adopted a formal document explaining trustee responsibilities and relationships. The policy includes five areas: general responsibilities, specific responsibilities, legal status and duty, standards of conduct, and disciplinary action.

Three trustees voted against the new policy which adds to, but doesn't replace, the older policy dubbed the "Blue Book."

Discussion on March 21 focused on broader trustee accountability to include relationships and not just board actions or decisions. The orientation subcommittee met with the administration committee to add trustees' comments to the document. When the document was introduced in the March 22 plenary session, it incorporated trustees' requests for broader accountability to include relationships, not just board actions or decisions.

The document represents two years of work for a three-member subcommittee, but its release follows a controversy over the use of "weblogs," particularly the one by IMB trustee Wade Burleson of Oklahoma that was critical of recent IMB trustee actions.

Trustee leadership originally called for Burleson, a former president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, to be removed from the board. That proposal was withdrawn before the Tampa trustee meeting.

The trustee board dealt with two motions in its final plenary session March 22.

A motion from trustee Bill Sutton of Texas called for all trustees to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. The motion passed and board chairman Tom Hatley of Arkansas said the forms would be mailed to every trustee who has come on the board since 2000 so they can sign the document and bring it with them to the next meeting on May 22-24 in Albuquerque, N.M.

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MS Positions

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OLOH, located on Hwy 98, approximately 13 miles west of Hattiesburg, MS, is looking for a Minister of Youth/ Education. If you are interested in the position please send your resume to: First Baptist Church Oloh, attn: Personnel Committee, 36 Oloh-Church Road, Sunnall MS 39482, Phone: (601) 264-8868, Fax: (601) 264-8813, fbclooh@megagle.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER needed for a small youth group at a church in McComb, Miss. Housing provided, call (601) 648-5214 or (601) 249-3823 and leave message.

THE GEORGE/GREEN AREA MISSIONS PROGRAM is now receiving resumes for the position of association missions director. Please send to George/Green area missions, P.O. Box 93, Lucedale, MS 39452. Resumes will be received through June 1, 2006.

Welch soldiering on at halfway point of campaign

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The push for Southern Baptist churches to baptize one million people in a year will reach the halfway point at the end of March.

"I'm extraordinarily encouraged by what I'm hearing from all across the country," Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Bobby Welch told Baptist Press, "because I've never heard so much positive talk about witnessing, winning and baptizing as I'm hearing now."

Welch, with his election as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2004, initiated the 'Everyone Can' Kingdom Challenge! to call Southern Baptist churches to "Witness, Win, and Baptize ... One Million" during the 2005-06 church year.

"There's no way to even remotely quantify how things are going numerically," Welch said. "However, several churches that have told me they have baptized more than 100 people in a single baptismal service. Just about every day I'm hearing from small churches that they are breaking records in baptisms. Sometimes it's only three baptisms and sometimes it's only eight, but that's more than they've ever done before and that's a great thing."

"What we're hearing from our Baptist associations across the country is overwhelmingly positive," Welch continued. "We've got associations in the mix like we've never had before. That's a very healthy, fresh touch to me. At almost every meeting I'm attending, there are associational missionaries who stand

up and share what they're doing in this Everyone Can campaign.

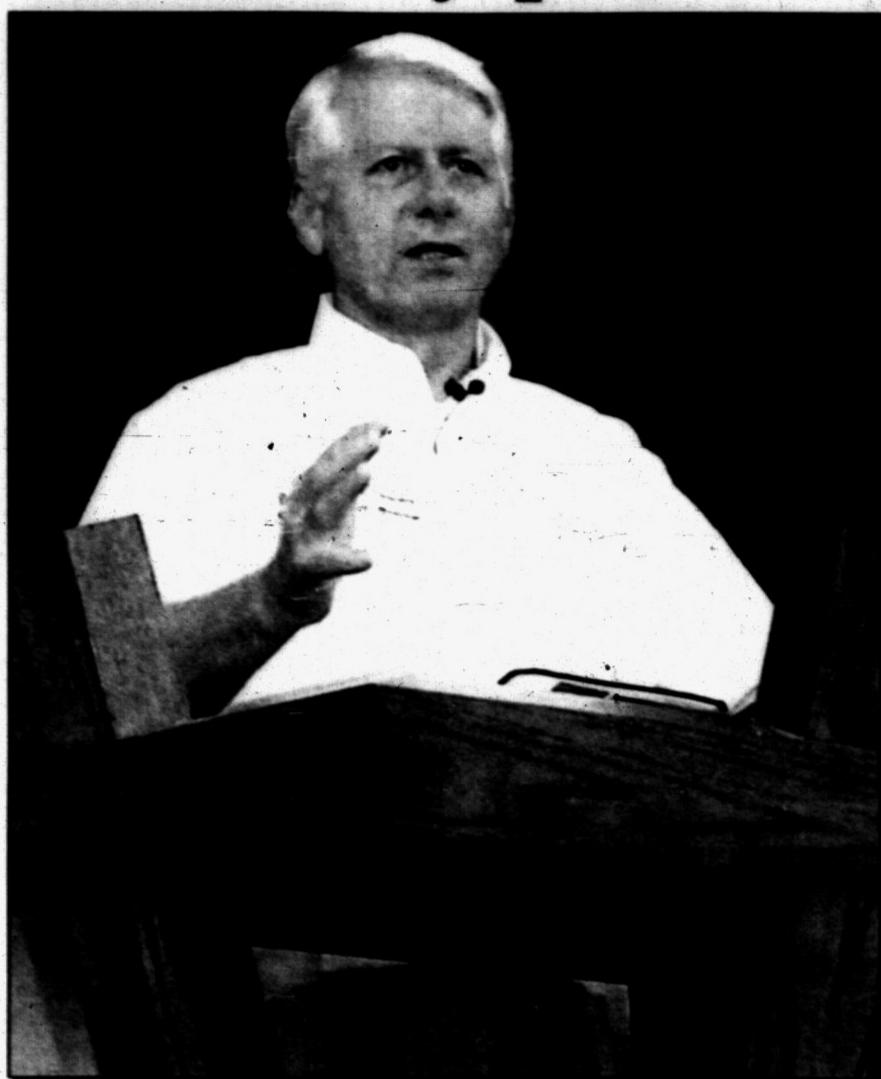
"One associational missionary announced that he's organized five baptismal rallies in one day. Another told me that three other associations are banding together for baptismal rallies. To me, that is huge, because that is an actual manifestation one of our Everyone Can goals: unity of purpose [for evangelism]."

"My disappointments so far are that we don't have enough time and enough resources to accomplish everything I'd like to in this evangelistic and baptismal effort."

"Some people ask me if I'll be disappointed if we fail, and I say, 'There's no way we can fail. Ask just one person who came to Christ as a result of Everyone Can, who had their guilty, stained heart cleansed from sin, who enjoys a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and who has access to our Creator God. [Ask that person] if Everyone Can failed, and that person will vehemently disagree. In fact, they'll tell you it was a smashing success."

Welch added that the Everyone Can initiative has been buffeted by "the distraction of the circumstances resulting from the hurricanes and the church fires in Alabama — but as usual, what presents itself as a distraction can also be used and has been used for the good of witnessing to others."

Several avenues of involvement remain a vital part of making the next six months as productive as possible for winning and baptizing the lost:



PROMOTING BAPTISM — Southern Baptist Convention President Bobby Welch speaks at Colonial Heights Church in Ridgeland in September 2004 during the kickoff of his campaign to encourage Southern Baptists to baptize one million new believers. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

- Pastors can schedule baptisms as part of their Easter Sunday services on April 16, one of the three special days that Welch has asked Southern Baptist churches to help build the Everyone Can momentum.

In addition to Easter Sunday and Nov. 27 of last year, Welch has asked that churches also highlight baptism on Sept. 30, the final day of the SBC's church year and the closing date of the Everyone Can initiative.

- Baptist associations can still schedule baptism rallies.

Last fall, Welch asked the associations to call their churches together for two such rallies by Sept. 30, 2006, on dates that best suit their calendars.

Suggestions for planning the associational rallies are available at <http://www.everyonecan.net> by clicking on the I'm It logo. The website also includes a template for a promotional poster.

The beginning steps, according to the suggestions, include a meeting with the association's director of missions and the

formation of a steering team to recruit the rally's leaders and make such decisions as the date, location, featured speaker and strategies for publicizing the gathering.

In a brief downloadable message titled You're It at the Everyone Can website — <http://www.everyonecan.net> — Welch says to pastors, "You're it and I'm it. I want to ask you, Can we count on you to take leadership in that association? Go to your associational director of missions ... go to fellow pastors and say, '... We need to do this, we can do this, we ought to do this, we need to be a part of this unified purpose.'"

• Baptists from across the country can participate in the Crossover evangelistic opportunities preceding this year's SBC annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C. This year's "Crossover Triad" evangelistic thrust is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, June 10-11, with the SBC's annual meeting to follow on June 13-14 at the Greensboro Coliseum Complex.

Links to Crossover details and a downloadable video for use in enlisting volunteers during Sunday services or other settings can be accessed at <http://www.everyonecan.net>.

• Churches can begin registering their baptism totals at the Everyone Can website, to provide "a ballpark figure of what kind of progress we're making," said Jay Johnston, director of FAITH/evangelism and discipleship at LifeWay Christian Resources. "We want to rejoice at what God has done." The final results of the initiative, however, will not be known until April 2007 when the compilation of Southern Baptists' Annual Church Profile is completed for the 2005-06 church year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

Johnston also encouraged pastors to send testimonies of what God is doing in their churches and communities as a result of the Everyone Can initiative.



Consumer Reports Magazine recently reported that approximately 70% of the more than two million Americans who die annually do not have a valid Last Will and Testament. Research has repeatedly shown that as many as 8 out of 10 Christians do not have a valid Will. In essence these individuals have failed to get their "ducks in a row" regarding their estate plans and philanthropic interests.

Since 1943, the Mississippi Baptist Foundation has assisted individuals in the highly specialized area of charitable estate planning. If you want to get your "ducks in a row" by protecting your loved ones and including a charitable component in your Last Will and Testament, give the Foundation a call at (601) 292-3210.

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Nominees sought for MBC

Members of the Committee on Nominations will soon begin meeting and reviewing the trustee/board member positions on the boards and commissions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) for 2007.

According to Hal Bates, committee chairman and pastor of First Church, Collinsville, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Commission
- Education Commission
- Historical Commission
- Mississippi Baptist Children's Village
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc., Jackson
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc., Memphis
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

The Nominating Committee will work in conjunction with the heads of the institutions and agencies in bringing a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers at the 171st annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on October 31-November 1.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting the MBCB, Executive Administration, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, e-mail bbox@mbcb.org or telephone (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, Ext. 201. Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations, Executive Administration at the above address to be received by May 1.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

FEBRUARY 2006

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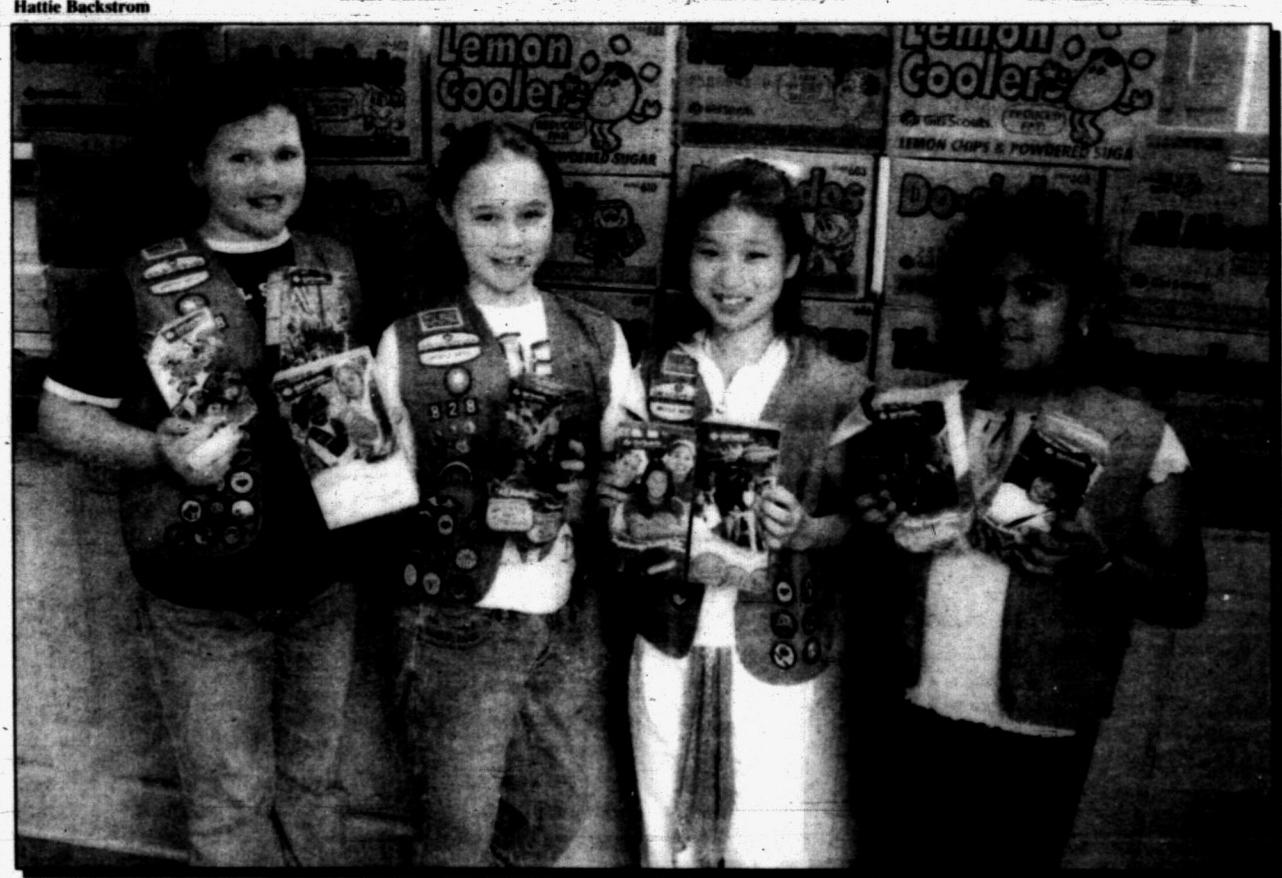
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Mr. Norris Harding
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The Junior Girl Scouts Troop 828 of Clinton, Mississippi, recently delivered 226 boxes of cookies to The Baptist Children's Village. The cookies were bought by individuals from the Clinton community during the Girl Scouts' cookie drive and designated for The BCV. Pictured L-R are Haleigh Spencer, Katie Pinkard, Rachel Kim, and Monica Kala.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

You Need to Remember

Luke 22: 14-20, 24-27, 31-34

By Huey Dedmon

If you are like me, you sat in front of your television eagerly cheering on America's team in the winter Olympics. Sporting events are a big part of our lives. We have all seen many examples of the "agony of defeat" and the "thrill of victory." We also have experienced our favorite team losing a game because of overconfidence in their ability to execute or because of underestimating their opponents. As we look at our passages for this week we find the disciples in similar circumstances.

Jesus and his disciples are seated around the supper table. Jesus has eagerly anticipated sharing this Passover meal with his disciples. (v15) It is always

our temptation to perceive that the reason Jesus is sharing this time with them is so that we can receive instruction on how we should conduct this very important ordinance of the church. For many Christians the Lord's Supper is just another function of the church, a ritual that must be carried out every quarter of the church year. It is so much more! The Lord's Supper is an act of obedience to Jesus. It calls for us to reflect on our own life and on the life that Jesus gave for the salvation of all who will believe. Participating in the Lord's Supper should draw us close to our Lord as we remember what he has done for us. There is a connection between what we do during the Lord's



Dedmon

Supper and how we live our lives. Many times our actions, after we take the Lord's Supper, totally contradict its meaning.

We are so much like the disciples. Here they are, sitting with Jesus, participating in this crucial moment in time and an argument breaks out among them about who is the greatest. (v24) Paul recognized the significance of what was happening in 1 Corinthians 11:26. The Lord's Supper is a witness to Jesus' death. He is laying his life down as a sacrifice for them and yet they are caught up in a petty argument that shows how self-centered humans really are. Sharing this moment with Jesus is crucial to our walk with him. He said; "do this in remembrance of me." How often do we forget what Jesus has done for us? Like the disciples, we become so overconfident in our own maturity level as believers, that we leave God and his word out of our thought process. It is

not just a ritual, it is a remembrance of who we once were and who we are now that Jesus has paid the penalty of our sin and set us free!

On the athletic field we attribute greatness to the ones who excel the most, make the big plays, and talk the big talk. In this passage it is obvious that this is not the pattern Jesus wants us to follow. In Luke 22:25-27, Jesus turns the disciples' argument into a teaching moment. It is not the greatest among you that is the greatest; the greatest is the one who is the servant. True greatness, according to Jesus, lies in servanthood. The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder of this important truth. Jesus willingly humbled himself to be the servant of the father. He obeyed the Father's will, not his own. If we desire to be what God desires us to be, we must do the same and humble ourselves to be his servants. As difficult as this is, the really hard part is that humbling ourselves to Jesus means becoming a servant to our fellow man.

Another application we can take from the Lord's Supper lies in area of underestimating our enemy. In verses 31-34 Peter's confidence in himself proved to be the very area of his failing. Realizing that Satan, our true enemy, most often attacks us where we feel the most confident will help us learn how to withstand his attacks. Our confidence should never be in our own abilities but in the abilities of our God. Satan sought to destroy Peter, (v31) but Jesus was praying for him. (v32) According to scripture, Jesus is at this very time at the right hand of God, interceding for us. Peter failed, but Jesus encouraged him to use his failure to strengthened his brothers when he "turned back" (v32) to following his Lord. You and I are going to fail, but if we are a true disciple we will turn back to the Lord. We must use our recovery from failure to encourage each other.

Dedmon is minister of education at First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Do You Live According to God's Truth?

Isaiah 28:14-18; 30:12-18

By Lori Clendinning

Long before he was known as the daytime host of "The Price is Right," television personality Bob Barker hosted an evening game show in the 1970s called "Truth or Consequences." Ordinary people were faced with opportunities to choose one option or another in a variety of games. Sometimes they won prizes or oftentimes the game ended with their winning nothing. Always, it was their choice, and the consequences were theirs, too.

In this week's lesson, the Lord's people faced consequences because of their failure to live according to the Lord's truth. There are grim penalties for rejecting the Lord's revelation and relying on worldly ways. As believers, we must live according to God's

revealed truth. Those who live according to the Lord's truths are secure, while those who reject it ultimately experience ruin. God wants His people to live according to His revealed truth rather than to rely on the ways of the world.

The prophet Isaiah faced many challenges in delivering God's message to the people of Judah. Chapters 28-32 largely deal with messages given during the Assyrian crisis when Isaiah and Judah were dealt national security blows. These chapters are often referred to as the "Assyrian cycle of prophecies." Since each chapter begins with a "woe" they are often called the "book of woes." They consist of a mixture of messages of judgment and salvation, threat and solace.

In the eighth century BC,



Clendinning

Judah, under the rule of King Hezekiah, and neighboring kingdoms remained vassal states paying duty to the Assyrian Empire. In its subservient state, Judah was blissfully ignorant of the forthcoming judgment by God. Under the rule of Sargon II, an Assyrian general who seized the throne when King Shalmaneser V died during the siege of Samaria, the Assyrian Empire was a daunting force that refused to recognize God. In 705 BC, when King Sargon II died, his son Sennacherib succeeded him. Heavily influenced by a pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem, King Hezekiah thought he could throw off the Assyrian yoke of oppressive rule. Isaiah prophesied against the dependence on Egypt as an act of blasphemy since it replaced God's power for the power of men.

Many people today, like Judah's citizens in Isaiah's day, indulge in self-deception rather than embrace God's revealed truth. They choose to operate

according to their own misguided schemes rather than according to God's truth. To reject God and His truth is to live a life divorced from reality and to deceive ourselves.

The only firm foundation for life is the foundation that the Lord has provided. In the context of eighth century BC, the reference to the "cornerstone" in Isaiah 28:16 possibly denotes the temple, a new king, a new building project that would ensure the city's protection, or a new community of faith. The term also has been interpreted to refer to God Himself. From a New Testament perspective, this verse is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, our "precious cornerstone." Only those who place their faith in the Lord and live according to God's revealed truth have a firm foundation for their lives.

The consequence of Judah's refusal to build on God's foundation and their reliance on man's power is illustrated beautifully in Isaiah 30:13-14: "this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly in an instant. It will break in pieces

like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern."

Because the Lord's people refused to receive His message and instead chose to depend on worldly methods, they would experience sudden and complete disaster. Imagine a nation's sin against God so great that no floodwall built by man could contain its power. Disaster would break through and none would be unaffected. Indeed, adversity comes to all people who reject God and His message.

The Lord's people can experience joyous security only as they wait patiently for Him. The Lord offers security to those who rest in His grace. "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength." (Isaiah 30:15). The Lord longs to be gracious to His children. "He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him." (Isaiah 30:18).

Clendinning is a member of First Church, Brandon.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

Record

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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All news items are subject to editing,

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Chaplain tackles one of saddest duties of Iraq war

GUNTERSVILLE, Ala. (BP)

— As a bitterly cold wind whips through Iraq's late-night hours, the harsh reality of war again hits Greg Long. He clutches his Bible as an Army honor guard, in solemn silence, carries a metal casket up the ramp and onto the plane to begin its journey back to the United States.

He stares at the casket and, thinking of his own family back home in Guntersville, Ala., wonders if the soldier had a wife and children whose worst fear just came true.

It's not your typical youth minister's evening.

Long, a Chaplain Major and minister of youth at First Church in Guntersville for the past 10 years, is in his first tour of duty in nearly 20 years of military service. He was called up for service in Iraq just after qualifying to become a chaplain last year.

"My primary responsibility is to work at the mortuary evacuation point," Long said. "All of the soldiers who have been killed come through there before they go home."

Long and his Marine counterpart do ceremonies at the plane's ramp, reading Scripture, praying, and saying a few words over the fallen soldiers and Marines. "At first, it was really, really hard, but you get to a point where you just have to do it. The hardest thing is seeing how young the soldiers are and wondering about how many children they have, things like that."

Long has five children, the oldest of whom is age 10. When he came home for a 15-day leave in early January, it was the best gift of all for the Long family and their Christmas could officially begin.

"I was trying to get home around Christmastime, but it was a little later than we had hoped. We told the kids that Santa was going to swing by Iraq and pick me up, but since they have camels in Iraq instead of reindeer, it was going to take a little bit longer," Long said with a laugh.

Long's wife Lisa said they got used to having him around again, but at least they were at the halfway point, as he had only about five months left on his tour of duty. "All our prayers are going that direction, that's for sure," she said.

In addition to their prayers, his children drummed up support for the troops, gathering Christmas cards to send to the Mideast. The goal was 1,000 cards but, concerned that other soldiers wouldn't have any, they began beating the bushes for more, ultimately gathering 6,000 cards from the church and community.

"I was able to distribute them to the men and that was wonderful," Long said.

When he's not doing ramp services, he is caring for the 9,000 soldiers to whom he and 15 other chaplains are assigned. Long preaches at a 10 a.m. Sunday service and fields questions day and night from soldiers who are soul-searching or simply need someone to listen.

Soldiers in that environment are open and searching for answers," he said. "One of the most exciting things that's happened as a result of that is I've had the opportunity to baptize three soldiers."

Long said the e-mails, prayer and support he receives from First Church in Guntersville help him keep going in his min-



SERVING, CARING — For Chaplain Maj. Greg Long, his primary duty in Iraq involves ceremonies of Scripture and prayer at the side of a fallen soldier's casket before its departure for the U.S. (BP photo)

istry. "For a while, I was really having a hard time with the ramp ceremonies and not sleeping a lot," Long said, "but I could feel the prayers going out for me and people would write me e-mails. It was encouraging and it really helped."

Joel Samuels, First Church's pastor, said praying for Long also has been a blessing to him and the church. "His stories are interesting, intriguing — and it has been a blessing to watch him work through that difficult process [of performing the ramp services]," Samuels said.

During Long's tour of duty, Bill Morrison has stepped up as youth minister. The youth have continued to grow under Morrison's leadership and by watching Long sacrificially give of himself in Iraq, Samuels said.

"It's been really good for the youth to see that there's something bigger than them and their own individual lives and watch their own youth minister take part in it," the pastor said.

The youth also have been able to participate in Long's ministry, sending care packages and encouraging notes.

"I receive a lot of e-mails from kids in the youth group, which is really encouraging," he said, adding that he sends out an e-mail newsletter each week to people in the church to let them know how they can pray for him.

"Dear prayer partners," Long wrote to the church in November. "I did ... a ramp for two more last week. That was another one that I will never forget. It took place on Veterans Day. Like I told Lisa, from now on Veterans Day will have a whole new meaning for me."

S.D.'s female lawmakers taking lead in abortion showdown

PIERRE, S.D. (BP and local reports)

— Slowly but surely, female legislators in South Dakota are shattering the myth that says male politicians are the only ones who support abortion restrictions.

Of the 16 women in the South Dakota House and Senate, 11 voted in February for a bill that would ban all abortions in the state, unless it's necessary to save the mother's life. Signed into law Feb. 6 by Republican Gov. Mike Rounds, the effort is a direct challenge to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

The S.D. law would go into effect July 1, although it likely will be struck down before then in federal court. Supporters hope the high court takes the case and overturns *Roe*.

"I just turned 40 this year, and I think it's extremely important that women my age speak out and say that abortion hurts women," South Dakota state Rep. Keri K. Weems, a Republican who represents part of Sioux Falls and who voted for the bill, told Baptist Press. "We want to not only protect women but also to protect babies."

The bill crossed party lines, receiving the support of the majority of Democratic women (four out of five voted for it) and Republican women (seven of 11 supported it). The Senate sponsor was Julie Bartling, a Democrat.

"I think the time has come that [abortion] needs to be brought before the Supreme Court — simply because 33 years have passed [since *Roe*]," Bartling told Baptist Press. "This legislative body has taken the bull by the horns for the last few years."

Polls show that men and women in the U.S. have similar attitudes about abortion. An aggregate of Gallup abortion polls from 2001-2003 showed that 45% of men and 43% of women considered themselves pro-life. By contrast, 47% of men and 48% of women called themselves pro-choice.

When asked detailed questions, women become even more pro-life. A poll of 3,300 American women released in 2003 by the pro-choice Center for the Advancement of Women showed that 51% favored banning abortion in the overwhelming majority of cases. Seventeen percent said abortion should never be available, while 34% said it should be available only in cases of rape, incest, and saving the mother's life.

Nevertheless, the belief still persists that men should not have a say on abortion laws and that women don't support such laws. When President Bush signed the ban on partial-birth abortion in 2003, he was surrounded by nine male politicians — a photo-op that made even his supporters cringe.

Upon seeing a photo of the signing, liberal, pro-abortion, Boston Globe columnist Ellen Goodman wrote: "It's a single-sex class photo of men making laws governing something they will never have: a womb." She later noted: "[W]hen President Clinton vetoed a similar bill, he was surrounded by women."

After South Dakota's legislature passed its abortion ban, columnist Jeffrey Page of The Record newspaper in New Jersey asserted: "As far as anyone knows, Mike Rounds, the governor of South Dakota, has never been pregnant and never in need of an abortion. Despite this, Rounds is prepared to sign into law the most restrictive anti-abortion law in the United States." The column's headline screamed: "South Dakota declares war on women."

South Dakota's female legislators are trying to change America's perceptions. "I don't think life is [only] a man's or a woman's issue, because it takes both to create life," Weems said.

The state's female legislators formed a pro-life and pro-family caucus, called Women for Women, which is comprised of about 65% of the women lawmakers and has Republican and Democratic members. One of the caucus' primary goals this session was passage of the abortion ban.

"In my early 20s I bought into the line of the pro-choice movement. I was influenced by that" Sen. Elizabeth

Kraus, a Republican and a member of the caucus, told BP. "I said, 'I don't think I would ever choose abortion for myself, but who am I to say what another person should choose?'"

Kraus, though, became pro-life over time. "When *Roe vs. Wade* passed, we didn't know that life began at conception, but our science has moved far beyond that," she said. "... I think it's obvious that it begins at conception. Even many pro-choice people will tell you that."

The abortion ban bill was based on the findings of a 17-member state task force that studied the impact abortion has had on America since 1973. Its members included legislators — Kraus was among them — and community leaders. The task force received testimony from nearly 2,000 women who had had abortions.

Among the findings in its 71-page report, the task force said that science has proven life begins at conception. The report further said that abortion harms women psychologically, emotionally and physically.

"The Task Force finds that it is simply unrealistic to expect that a pregnant mother is capable of being involved in the termination of the life of her own child without risk of suffering significant psychological trauma and distress," the report said.